

14 May 1979

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MEMORANDUM FOR: [REDACTED] SA/DCI
Herbert Hetu, D/PA

FROM: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Possible Speech Insert

The following is a quotation from a Jody Powell press conference:

Questioner: "You refuse to comment on this, yet this is important information that the American people have a right to know."

Powell: "There is information the American people also have the right not to know, i.e., it is in the best interests of the country that we conduct some of our diplomacy, military affairs, and intelligence in secrecy.

"Beyond this, if the press have the right to know almost anything, it is then the press that determines what the American public will know by whether or not they elect to print it. Clearly under the First Amendment of the Constitution we cannot order the press to print something if we are willing to release it. Why should the media become the only arbitors of what the American public can and should know? Surely the people elect their officials in order to hold them responsible for administering the affairs of state on their behalf. Such administration does require certain elements of privacy and secrecy. Hence, one of the most overworked cliches today is this assertion by the press that they have a right under the First Amendment of the Constitution to know and reveal everything."

An absurd example of this is a further exchange in the above dialogue with Jody Powell:

Questioner: "If you tell it to the Senators, they are elected by the people, why don't you tell it to the American people who elect them? Why don't you declassify it?"

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